THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE):(a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Procurement of light weight sturdy helmets for Indian army

314. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Indian Army propose to procure light weight and sturdier helmets for its Jawans to reduce the casualties in counter-insurgencyjoperations in Kashmir and North-East; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) No, proposal has been received by the Ministry of Defence from the Army Headquarters to procure light weight helmets.

Decrease in the number of persons joining defence forces

315. SHRI SHAHID SIDDIQUI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that less and lesser number of people are applying to join the defence forces;

(b) if so, what is the percentage of decrease in applications in the last five years; and

(c) whether Government have made special drives to recruit people from areas and from amongst groups and communities where people have not traditionally been joining the army for various reasons?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) No,.Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Every eligible citizen of the country irrespective of caste, class, religion, community and domicile is eligible for recruitment into the armed forces, provided he or she meets the laid down age, educational, physical, medical standards and other criteria.